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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the role of work in a psychology work/study curriculum at Antioch College (Ohio), and argues that the view of student's work that is described may represent a missed opportunity to help students learn. Students, through interviews and journal entries, provided their opinions regarding if and in what ways their classes influenced their work on the work assignment, and if and in what ways their work experiences influenced their classroom work. Students also provided their assessments as to how the combination of work and study affected their career planning. The interviews revealed that influences of classes on students' work did exist, but in terms of the work experience affecting the class experience, there were some differences of opinion. Also, students generally perceived both classroom and work experiences as influential to their values and career development. Contains eight references. (GLR)

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Theory into Practice: The Role of Work in the Undergraduate Psychology Curriculum

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Theory into Practice: The Role of Work in the Undergraduate Psychology Curriculum

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A paper on the role of work in a psychology curriculum may seem to be an odd contribution to a symposium on teaching. Work is usually something we think of our students doing **after** graduation, or perhaps during the summer when we have little contact with them. In this paper I want to use my experiences teaching developmental psychology at Antioch College to argue that the view of student's work that I just described may represent a **missed opportunity** to help students learn.

I'll describe Antioch's unusual work/study curriculum, try to convince you that the combination of work and study will become an increasing part of college life, provide some evidence of the power of alternating work and study, and end with some concrete suggestions about how you might help your students integrate their work and study.

Arthur Morgan designed Antioch's work/study curriculum in the early 1920's. His vision was that **every** student would alternate between periods of study on campus and periods of work at a wide variety of job sites, throughout his/her college career. We call this combination of work and study Co-operative Education, and the students call their jobs "co-ops".

In one sense, a paper about psychology-related jobs and their effects on psychology majors at Antioch is antithetical to Morgan's educational model, because the "work" part of the curriculum was not intended by Morgan to be a vocational training program. Most of the jobs our students do are unrelated to their majors. The idea was, and is, that experiences in the world of work generate learning very broadly defined: how to find your way in a new city, how to budget your salary to eat **and** pay the rent, how to fit in to a group of workers... a lot of "knowing how", when usually we think of a college education as "knowing that." But with apologies to Morgan, I want to focus on jobs that our psychology students take that **are** related to the major -- we require that students do at least one of them, although many students do more than one.

Our experiences teaching in a work/study curriculum are likely to be applicable to more traditional psychology departments because the combination of work and study is becoming more the rule than the exception. I see this trend as coming from a number of movements in higher education, in the economy, and in the demography of our student populations:

1. The first is the so-called service learning movement. There are a number of organizations listed at the end of this paper that promote the kind of volunteer service described by McCluskey-Fawcett (1993) in the paper that preceded this one in the symposium.

2. Another movement toward tying together the classroom and work is at the National level: the Clinton administration has proposed a National Service program to allow students to work to pay off college loans. The details have not been forthcoming, but the bottom line is that students will be allowed to work off their debts, perhaps before, during, or after college.

3. Third, more majors are requiring some sort of practicum or internship as part of their programs (Keeton & Tate, 1978). What started in engineering and education programs has spread to psychology, sociology, and social work majors. Any field that can involve **practice** might consider the usefulness of asking students to try on that practice, to enhance learning, get experience, build a resume, test out career plans.

4. Fourth, as college costs skyrocket, **paid** work during college, including the Federal College Work/Study Program, will make college more accessible to more students.

5. Finally, what we used to call the "non-traditional student" is now the norm. Many of our students are older than 22, and come to college with significant work experiences, and/or work their way through college, perhaps attending classes on weekends or evenings. Here are more work experiences that could be used as fodder for learning.

Work, then, isn't just something students do at Antioch, but is likely to be a part of many students' undergraduate careers. I will very briefly describe a theoretical framework for my message and then give you some examples from my students of how work and study can be integrated.

Many of the developmental learning theories that we teach suggest that **learning is experiential learning**. Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget all talked about the development that results when one moves from theorizing to experience to reflection, and then to the transformation of one's theory. More recently, Kolb's (1984) work on learning styles suggests that concrete experience and active experimentation define one group of student learners. Perry's (1970) work tells us that experience and reflection challenge students to move toward more mature intellectual positions. The implications of these theories is that experiential learning is crucial to student development.

What follows are examples of work/study integration that students were able to generate based on their experiences at Antioch. My information comes from two sources. First, I trained a student (Tay Okamoto) to interview 10 psychology seniors. Because of Antioch's small size, and the fact a portion of the student body is always off-campus working, this number represents most of the population of on-campus psychology seniors. Also, I reviewed several journals that students kept while on co-op as part of independent study courses they were taking that were related their jobs. We ask every student to complete one of these classes, because they promote reflection and integration: the students read relevant theory and research, then they go to work and sometimes their experiences support their reading and sometimes they don't.

In designing the interview, we conceptualized work/study integration as a two-way street. That is, we asked the students if and in what ways their classes influenced their work

on co-op, and if and in what ways their co-op experiences influenced their classroom work. Finally, we asked them about if and how the combination of work and study affected their career planning.

When asked about influences of their classes on their work on co-op, most students agreed that such influences existed. One said,

> I took **Individual Counseling Methods** and I went on co-op and I was relating to the clients on a one-to-one basis. I played a lot of different roles depending on what client I was talking to. Sometimes I would do different theories...just to see how effective one or the other could be or who it was affecting more. And I would write it down if it interested me...

Another student said of the same class...

> I did a class called **Individual Counseling Methods**...it was a good class [but] ...it was unrealistic [when we tried to] simulate a counseling [situation] effectively. Still, something kind of sunk in as far as the method or an approach and I felt myself [on co-op], working with some of the kids using some of those...really open-ended type of tag questions...leaving things open for people to ... say what's going on. And reflecting. I felt that class helped me nail down some of those approaches that I was aware of but didn't know what they were called... in that case I feel that it helped me not only on co-op but every single day.

Another student who had learned interview skills in an adult development class found herself using those skills informally. Listen to the range of jobs she held over four years and the way she used a classroom-taught skill to make sense of her experiences:

> My first co-op was at a Community Hospital Birth Center, and that was working with family education...I did counseling with parents and I did that again later at the Family Health Education Center. And I've done work with teenage mothers...one of those co-ops [where] you get your life, get your apartment, set up in a new city you don't know, work. [Then] I worked in the French quarter [in New Orleans] ...as a

> cocktail waitress and got to know lots of strippers. [I did these] informal interviews with [these women] and [thought about how in Psychology of Women we talked about] the professional exploitation of women ... we talked about [their views about it] ... the job wasn't terrific but that was sort of good and [then] I worked at Planned Parenthood and then I worked in a convalescent home and next quarter I'm going to work at the [local day care center]... the developmental classes [I took] applied and the Psychology of Women...a lot of the theoretical stuff that we learned here applied. But most of the stuff I had to figure out on my own. Like specific disorders that people had I had to pick up on my own...

Some students acknowledged that in a sense all their co-ops became psychology co-ops because after several courses they started to recognize in their co-workers behavioral processes that they had learned about in class:

> I ... worked at a... School for Boys [with] about 60 boys from about 6 to 13, emotionally disturbed and behavior disordered ... [then] I worked in the Admissions Department...[then I got involved in the College] fire department. I guess I'd have to say that in their own little way, they all are [psychology related]... I have dealt with people on so many different levels and ... I completely understand ... a lot of the group dynamics... that happen in the fire department...and how they get started. Kind of interesting.

The student who worked at the fire department added...

> It's sort of like I tend to see the [fire] department as its own little lab. If I choose to observe it ... there's all kinds of stuff I can bring into the classroom...without breaking any kind of confidentiality...there's a wealth of information [there]...

He also chose classes because of interests sparked on co-op...

> ...There were a lot of other psyc classes that I put on hold to take some other ones that were more interesting [after working there]...group functioning class was one that I was very interested in...because I was so ingrained in a group... I really wanted that information and [it] proved very helpful.

These quotes suggest that students may be more likely to find skills that are taught in the classroom as useful in their work, such as interview, counseling, and small group skills. Classroom work that provides an analytical framework through which work experiences can

be understood also were useful.

The other direction of influence between work and study is the use in the classroom of the rich experiences that students bring back to campus when they return from their jobs. My experience has been that such integration of work to study has to be structured, encouraged, and prompted, but that what is gained in the classroom is well worth the effort (Linn and Jako, 1992). When asked about bringing co-op experiences into psychology classes, one woman said:

> I've done that ... [within my developmental psychology classes]. [For example] when we discuss ... stages of development that are one plateau after another and different ... events have to happen in order to boost you [to the next] one... But I [said] I can see...how that's not absolutely true and I can see how some clients take one event and jump two stages...

Another student described his "dream assignment" at Antioch:

> If there could be a way to... create an analysis of ... the place where I was working... an analysis of the kind of school of thought [and how it] influences the way they do things. I think that kind of analysis is so important ... And especially with psychology because the [schools of thought] really go head to head.

When our students experience what this student described as different schools of thought, some in the classroom and some on co-op, they are challenged, in Perry's (1970) terms, by the realization that different Authorities provide seemingly contradictory Truths. Such experiences can challenge dualistic thinkers more than exercises set up in class such as debates, because praxis, not just the juxtaposition of ideas, is at stake. The student can test the usefulness of each view in a concrete way.

Not every student saw such connections:

> I think the classes and the co-op are entirely different. I guess I got something out of each of them, but I think they're entirely different... [classes involve] ways of looking at the world, and [co-ops involve] ways of dealing with the world...

What is needed is research to help us understand what types of students at what levels of development are able to see the connections between theory and practice. As Hursh and Borzak (1979) described, students often need our help to understand that classroom behaviors of reading, reflecting, and analysis are part of the same cycle of learning as are field work behaviors like doing, helping, and problem-solving.

The use of work experiences for career planning was the final focus of our interview. We have some evidence from another source that students perceive the combination of work and study as affecting career development and other developmental areas. Each year, prospective graduates complete a Senior Profile Questionnaire. The seniors are asked to rate the influence of various program components on several developmental areas, including four to be shown here: values and basic philosophy of life, intellectual development, social development, and career plans. Here are the program components that students tended to place at the top of the influence ratings: a) co-op experiences, b) classroom experiences, and c) living or working abroad. In the Figure are the data from the last three years' graduating

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classes, and the pattern of influences replicates published data from two years before that (Linn & Jako, 1992). A discussion of experiences abroad are beyond the scope of this paper (see Abrams, 1979 for a study of the impact of those experiences on Antioch students).

Classroom experiences were perceived by students to influence their intellectual development, but so were co-op experiences. Co-op experiences, especially, were perceived to influence social development. And both classroom and co-op experiences were perceived to influence students' values and career development.

But in what way does this career development happen? We found both positive career development (that is, "this is what I want to do") and negative career development ("this is what I don't want to do") and we think both are important.

Here are some examples of positive career development from our interviews:

The student who worked in the Birth Center, the Family Health Education Center, at Planned Parenthood and as a waitress in the French quarter said:

> Yes, I think [the psychology-related co-ops] made me think that ... I'm going to be in some sort of life span development [field]. Probably working with families and young children... but I don't know if I'll be a Ph.D. or anything. I think that one thing Antioch's curriculum has done for me is sort of reinforce an idea that I always had ... I think every school should have [a] co-op [program].

Another said:

> ...when I came here...I had been accepted in a lot of Art schools, but...when I went out on my first co-op, that kind of changed all that and [I] decided to pursue psychology ... I went out [to that co-op] for six months and it was so exciting ... working with those kids ... that... my interest in Psychology ... was definitely reinforced...

Another student was able to use work experiences to determine her

satisfaction with working with different client populations:

> I know I was going to be [a] developmental [psychologist] but for a while I thought I was going to [work with people with] behavioral [disorders]. But I was working with a lot of [teens] that had behavioral problems and I could see me...getting involved and being in conflict... And that's primarily why I wanted to deal with children. Aside from a love for them, I know I could tolerate them more than I could tolerate adults or teenagers. But I know it is going to be developmental, I still don't know if its going to be clinical...[but] I do know the area of interest and I can actually visualize the make up of it all.

Here is an example of what we call negative career planning, finding out what you don't want to do:

> ...working in the field of psychology, I just don't know if I'm interested in that. But [the co-op program] has given me a clearer view of the reality of it.

Another said:

> I think the co-ops ... have convinced me ... of areas I don't want to work in... it's also told me that ... changing things is not only more difficult than it seems but more complicated than it seems. That's the major thing.

And again:

> I worked with mentally retarded clients in various backgrounds from residential to caseworker to manager to classroom teacher's assistant. And I've worked with different age groups from infants to 50 years old. And I know it's not ... what I want to do after I graduate from graduate school but it's along the lines of what I want to do.

Finally, the interviews told me where we could do better:

> ...Some professors are better at letting and getting students to bring in their co-op experiences into the classroom... but I've been in lots of classes where it hasn't happened. And when that's half of your education, and that information is very valuable, I think it should be brought into the classroom more than it is.

I want to add just a couple of other examples of students integrating work and study by doing

independent study courses while working in a job related to that course. One student described such an experience in a graduate school application. She had as a goal to be an art therapist.

> During my co-op at the Center for Creative Arts Therapy, I worked on an independent study in creative arts therapy that I devised myself and that was approved by my advisor. I created the independent study so that I could familiarize myself with modalities of creative art therapy and with terminology and the history of art therapy. In my first year at Antioch I had taken a community psychology course. Based on the knowledge acquired from that course and skills acquired from a previous co-op at a rehabilitation center, I created a community based adolescent art program ... I also learned new skills such as grant proposal writing and non-profit organization funding.

Finally, listen to a journal entry from a student who was reading about women and aging while working in a retirement center:

> I worked with crafts and stuff today. I brought E. in to do clay. We have struck up quite a good relationship. She likes to talk to me. D. (the activities director) said she probably wouldn't do much because she doesn't have a lot of strength, but that it is good to keep her fingers moving and her arms and muscles stretching. She made a lot of little prints. In some ways I prefer the crafts to just visiting because there is less pressure on me to make conversation. In Gari Lesnoff-Caravaglia's introduction to The World of Older Women I am struck by the passage:
>
> > When she begins to feel an erosion of her power grip on the world as what she has to say has little effect upon the listener, eyes shift and wander, and she is left without an audience.
>
> (This is in reference to when a woman begins to realize she is old.) I am struck by these passages about [women] knowing they are no longer listened to with respect or interest. There is such a stereotype of old people just rambling on, imparting useless information.. I find that it isn't so easy to get people here to talk with me. There is this real testing period. "What do yo want to talk about?" "Ask me a question...what do you want to know?" it just is not true that old people are dying to talk and will talk to anyone...I really have to prove my interest in conversing...This is a good practice, lesson, whatever, for me. It reminds me to listen.

I have provided some qualitative data to demonstrate some of the ways that work can be important to training the next generation of psychologists. It may be that these quotes from current students reflect very short-term effects of experiential learning, and that long-term

effects are different in kind or strength. We've designed a study to begin next year in which we'll interview Antioch alumni from the 40's, 50's, and 60's to determine the effects of alternating work and study on their personal and career histories. We hope to be able to report from this study the long-term effects of combined work and study.

But perhaps these effects can only be found in a program in which students alternate between work and study on a regular basis? I suggest not. I want to conclude with some ideas about making the most of whatever work experiences your students have:

- consider using your professional contacts to help students find summer jobs in research or in the human service sector;

- consider incorporating required volunteer work experiences as part of undergraduate psychology courses;

- consider including assignments in your courses in which students are asked to reflect on life or work experiences they've had (including childcare, camp counseling, or care of aging grandparents) in light of information presented in class;

- consider finding out about psychology-related work experiences of the students in your classes, and encouraging students to bring those experiences, as "data", to their classroom discussions and paper-writing;

- consider helping students to design independent study courses to be completed during a psychology-related summer job or internship so that theory and practice can be integrated within the same time frame. See Newman & Watts (1989) and Hursh & Borzak (1979) for ideas about assignments that encourage such integration.

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Organizations that provide support and training in experiential education:

Campus Outreach Opportunity League
386 McNeal Hall
University of Minnesota
St. Paul, MN 55108-1011

National Commission for Cooperative Education
360 Huntington Avenue
Boston, MA 02115

Council for Adult and Experiential Learning
223 West Jackson
Suite 510
Chicago, IL 60606

National Society for Experiential Education
3509 Haworth Drive
Suite 207
Raleigh, NC 27609-7229

Figure

Graduating Seniors' Perceptions of Influences of Three Program Components on Four Developmental Areas for 1990-92